

The Builder.

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LAST week we endeavoured, it is hoped not unsuccessfully, to give such of our readers as had not seen the new Palace of Parliament, at Westminster, a general

idea of its plan and arrangement, as well as an engraved view, and more especial description of the House of Lords, now occupied. In our present number we illustrate the House of Commons, at the north end of the House, shewing the brass gates, which separate it from the latter, and the carved stone-work around them more, in detail than we were able to give the work within the House.*

In order to get at our subject conveniently, let us enter the building to-day by the Royal Tower, in Abingdon-street, that enormous structure, into the lower part of which the Queen's state carriage and eight horses will be driven, to place her Majesty at the foot of the staircase on the north side of it, which leads first to a chamber to be called the "Norman Porch," and then to Her Robing Room.

This tower is 80 feet square, and, to the top of the octagon turret with which each of its four angles will be furnished, will be 346 feet high,—or little less than the height of the top of the cross which surmounts St. Paul's Cathedral! The boldness of the idea, and the effect that will be produced by this erection, may not be judged of by comparing it with the lofty spires of our cathedrals, because here the whole structure is taken up of the same dimensions, or nearly so, to the top, while in those the mass is rapidly diminished towards the summit. The faces of the tower will be elaborately panelled and ornamented, and will include two ranges of triple windows.

Standing within the porch formed by the lower part of the tower, and looking up, a rough boarded ceiling meets the eye at a considerable elevation from the ground, to which access is obtained by flights of wooden stairs. Venture up, if you may. The scene is extraordinary: that which looked so blank and quiet below, is here all bustle and startling activity. Twenty carvers are at work by the light of gas, fashioning enormous bosses at the intersections of a star-shaped web of groins,—the net-work of the ponderous stone vault which is suspended over the whole area of the porch, and will carry the floor of the upper chamber.

In excellence of workmanship and the science of shaping stones, the moderns are pre-eminent. Once imbue our operatives with the artistic feeling and skill of the old masons, and architectural works may be carried out to surpass any thing the world has yet seen. Very much has been done towards this at the building of which we are speaking.

The piers of the tower will be adorned within the porch with gigantic statues on bracket pedestals.

The royal staircase, the ascent to which, as we have already said, is on the north side of the porch, is very picturesque in effect, and would afford some capital subjects for illustration, even without the statues of sovereigns, which are to be placed there ultimately.

For the present we hurry up it, and through

the Norman Porch, into the Queen's Robing Room, which will have an elaborate ceiling, similar in character to that of the Chapel Royal at St. James's Palace.

This apartment, which we may call roughly 60 feet long and 35 feet wide, opens into the Royal Gallery (already spoken of as a noble hall, 108 feet in length), along which the Queen will proceed when robed, towards the House of Lords, from which the Royal Gallery is separated only by the Victoria Hall, one of the apartments finished. This part of the building will be the next completed.

The Royal Gallery, besides frescoes on the walls, will contain the continuation of a series of statues of sovereigns, commenced on the staircase, and so will the Victoria Hall. In fact, throughout the structure, every yard of wall will receive a picture, and every convenient space, or niche, a statue.

Of the fittings of the Victoria Hall we shall not now speak, reserving our description to accompany a view of it, which we propose to give,—but passing along a corridor which runs on either side of the House of Lords (8 feet 3 inches wide, exclusive of recesses, and panelled, both walls and ceilings, with wainscot), we gain admittance to the Peers', or Public Lobby,—the subject of our present illustration.

Here, as in the House of Lords, the whole glitters with colours and gilding,—carvings in stone, stained glass, encaustic tiles, and fine work in metal, all offer themselves for examination.

We will call this apartment 35 feet square. The ceiling is divided into compartments, in which are blazoned the rose, shamrock, and thistle, alternately, in circles, surrounded by coloured ornaments on a vellum-coloured ground; the moulded ribs are painted a deep neutral brown, with stencilled enrichments in red, blue, and white. Pendants, terminating in gilt crowns, intersect the ribs at their junction, and the corbels are angels holding shields, with the royal initials surrounded by the garter.

The main entrance to the House of Peers is through a grand archway, closed by the elaborate brass gates already alluded to, and represented by our engraving, surmounted by the royal arms and supporters on a panelled ground. There are three corresponding archways, also surmounted by shields; the whole of these are painted and gilt in their proper colours. In the side panels corresponding to the windows, are painted the arms of the peers called to the first Parliament, blazoned with mantlings and scrolls on a diapered gold ground. On an upper range of panels over the archways are likewise blazoned the arms of the six royal lines.

The lobby is lighted by four large gothic candelabra, bronzed and gilt. Some of the windows are filled with stained glass, continuing the illustrations of the arms of the peers called to the first Parliament. The remainder will be completed shortly. These windows were executed, like the one window in the House of Lords, by Mr. Hardman.* The pavement of the floor consists of encaustic tiles by Minton, of lions, on a red ground, and initials on a blue ground, alternately, formed in squares by black marble margins; and in the centre is a red and white rose in coloured marbles on a blue ground (reflecting a centre rose in the ceiling), sur-

rounded by a margin of twining roses in brass on an enamelled blue ground. The marble work was executed by Milnes, of Bakewell, in Derbyshire.

The door-handles, escutcheons, and plates are of iron, tinned.

To pass once more from the decorative to the structural, we will take our readers from this lobby to the Central Hall (a corridor 60 feet long, will connect them when finished), and, on ascending the scaffold, they will get a further idea of the strength and solidity of the carcase over which such delicate and diverse adornments are to be spread. The effect there is very striking. The hall, our readers will remember, is an octagon 70 feet square. In each of the eight sides, above the level of the adjoining parts of the building is an arch, 14 feet in span; and from the spring of these is about to be commenced the groined vault,—a ponderous mass to be carried masonically. The height from the floor to the key-stone will be 75 feet; one of the bosses, lying there already prepared, measured 4 feet in diameter, and will supply a scale in the mind for the whole.

The thrust of the vault will, of course, be great, and due preparation is being made to withstand it; a turret is carried up against each of four of the sides to serve as an abutment, a strong wrought-iron tie passes round the whole at the springing, embracing also the turrets; and all the stones of the vault are keyed one into the other.

St. Stephen's Hall, which opens out of the Central Hall, is ready for the groining, and the addition to the length of Westminster Hall, to be called St. Stephen's porch, and by means of which, as already said, entrance is to be given from the noble old hall, is being rapidly proceeded with. We will simply say further, that statues of Marlborough and Nelson* will be placed in the porch, and that in St. Stephen's Hall, will be statues of men who have played important parts in the history of the Commons;† and then, as we have once more reached the outside, make our escape from the attractions of Mr. Barry's noble pile for the present.

Mr. Grissell's workmen are now actively occupied in preparing the fittings of the House of Commons, with the view possibly of completing the House in time for the new parliament. Much of the wood-carving is already executed.

In our last number we alluded to Jordan's patent carving machinery as a most important invention which had tended greatly to facilitate the execution of the carved decorations of the New Palace of Westminster, and having recently visited the works in the Beccles-road, Lambeth, where we saw the machines in operation, we can confidently recommend them to the notice of all who are seeking real carving at a moderate price.

The machines are extremely simple, consisting of few parts, and being entirely free from jointed movements. The lower or horizontal part is a double railway: one carriage or frame travels on a rail to and from the workman, and a second carriage or table travels on this frame at right angles to the first movement, so that by combining these two movements, the workman can readily work the table in any direction he pleases. On this table is fixed the pattern and as many pieces of work as can be carved

* One of the Commissioners of Fine Arts told us a few days ago, that Marlborough and Wellington were to be placed there. In the fourth report, however, the names stand as we have given them. The Honourable Commissioners' mind was probably running on the monument at Hyde Park Corner.

† Nelson, Harcourt, Lord Portland, Lord Mansfield, Lord St. John, Sir Robert Walpole, Lord Chatham, Lord Sandwich, Burke, Pitt, Fox, and Grey.

We may mention here, that a commission has been given for two of the statues of Barons, to fill the niches in the House of Lords by Sir John Thomson of Paisley and to Mr. Jackson of Edinburgh, for two others.

* We were wrong, it seems, in saying that the remainder of the windows in the House of Lords would be supplied to the same artist. The contract for the whole of these windows is undertaken by Messrs. Hardman and Allen, of Edinburgh, under the supervision of the Fine Arts Commissioners. The window in question was executed under the direction of Mr. Barry but is left to work by, as to colours and general treatment.